DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 656 CS 205 922

AUTHOR Diamond, Irene M., Ed.: And Others
TITLE A Guide to Providing Individualized Writing Experiences--Writing Labs and Writing Centers.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 104p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Individual Instruction; *Learning Resources Centers; Middle Schools; *Resource Materials; Teaching Guides; *Teaching Methods; Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Wisconsin Writing Project; *Writing Laboratories

ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to provide a model for giving the individual student writer extended opportunities for writing and writing instruction through a learning-centered writing lab. The first section defines the learning center or writing lab concept and subsequent sections discuss the rationale, organization, and suggested activities for writing centers for kindergarten through grade two, grades three through five, middle school, and high school. Resource materials, model outlines, and sample handouts and writing exercises are provided for the various grade levels. (AEA)

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A GUIDE TO PROVIDING INDIVIDUALIZED WRITING EXPERIENCES--

WRITING LABS AND WRITING CENTERS

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Preface

This guide is designed to provide a model for giving the individual student writer extended opportunities for writing and writing instruction. It is our assumption that most students need more actual writing experiences than the traditional classroom structure offers. However, this assumption confronts the teacher with a seemingly insurmountable task: providing an individualized program with a variety of writing skills to be presented in a variety of ways in a restricted amount of time.

One approach to solving this problem is the learning-centered writing lab, which simultaneously gives students a more expansive writing program while freeing the teacher during class time to work in a one-to-one situation with each student. This is not to say that we are offering an "easy way out." Learning centers and writing labs require much thoughtful and time-consuming preparation to ensure effective, interesting tasks and efficient, productive activities for the students. This guide is directed to the concerned teachers who are willing to put forth the necessary effort to help students become better writers. We have tried to make this suggested program useful and adaptable to any classroom setting.

Definitions

John Morlan, in Classroom Learning Centers, defines learning centers as places containing "materials, equipment and learning space so arranged that children in one class can work at a variety of learning tasks simultaneously."[1] Each center contains an explanation of the task and directions written so students are able to work independently. These centers can be used to reinforce concepts already taught in a more traditional fashion, to lead students to discover new concepts to be covered later by the class, or to provide corrective or remedial instruction for a variety of problems. This approach offers several advantages to both teachers and students. Interdisciplinary lessons show the relationships among areas of study often kept separate, especially at the middle and high school levels. Teachers can individualize instruction practically, something we are told we should be doing but which seems impossible in the large classes most of us are assigned. Students learn self-management, cooperation and decision-making skills so necessary at all levels. Centers can be planned to enhance creativity or to spark interest, goals no single lesson can ever accomplish for all students.

However, all these benefits can be realized only through skillful management by the teacher. Gathering and/or creating materials which will accomplish the desired effect, is a time-consuming and

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[1]Morlan, John E. Classroom Learning Centers. Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, 1974, p.1.

ongoing task. When and how to use the centers must be carefully gauged to provide a proper balance of instruction and independent work for each class. The room must be arranged to encourage serious effort and to discourage distraction. The teacher must keep records of student progress and evaluate student performance of or energy given to tasks.

In addition to all this independent and individualized activity, learning centers provide the teacher with opportunities to confer with students one at a time about problems or progress. These conferences form the major part of any good writing lab, a place where students receive intensive, tutorial help with their writing, either in general or for a specific assignment.

Whether a writing lab is an adjunct to classroom learning centers, as is usually the case in elementary and middle schools, or a separate place specially staffed and containing corrective learning centers, as is often the case in high school and college, its primary purpose is to help the student understand his own approach to writing and to show him how to improve it. In this situation, the teacher becomes a skillful guide, a sounding board, or whatever the student's needs seem to demand. He is not a lecturer or an editor: classroom instruction assumes the former role, and the student must learn to assume the latter. Again, records must be kept of progress, but evaluation should be left to other settings.

We must emphasize that neither learning centers nor writing labs are intended to replace classroom instruction. Both are

supplementary to and supportive of regular class work, providing additional practice, explanation or reinforcement of traditional subject matter in styles geared to individual needs and interests.

In order to make this guide as specific and helpful as possible, and yet to cover a program for all students K - 12, we have chosen to divide this booklet into three sections: K - 5, 6 - 8, and 9 - 12. Each section has been written by a teacher who is working at that level and is familiar with the specific needs and problems of that age group.

The Writing Center in the Kindergarden-Second Grade Classroom

I. Research and Definitions

Until recently, very little research has been done on the writing of young children. Researchers are beginning to look into the acquisition of writing skills before children enter school. There is growing evidence that children write before formal schooling, and in many cases before reading. Hall (1976) reports that a strong interest in writing appears at around age four.[1] Four and five-year old children write on paper, furniture, books and walls. Writing becomes a part of their dramatic play. Imitating adults around them, children write out grocery lists, restaurant orders, etc. They want to learn to write and begin practicing long before they enter school.

Hall describes a study that was made of early writers, who were identified by teachers and by examining their writing samples, as children who engage in self initiated writing activities and show legible letter and word forms and evidence that they are trying to communicate words or ideas through writing prior to entering kindergarten. Extensive interviews were held with the parents of eighteen of these children. In 17 out of 18 cases, interest in writing preceded interest in reading. Hall concludes

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[1]Hall, Mary Anne, et. al. "Writing Before Grade One - A Study of Early Writers", Language Arts, May 1976, p. 582.

that early exposure to and experience with writing as communication may facilitate interest in both writing and reading and may contribute to initial success in school. The importance of early writing merits at least as much attention as early reading.[2] As stated by Mimi Chenfeld:

> All children have stories simmering inside, waiting to be told, waiting to be written and shared. They have imaginations that delight in language. They play with words, rhymes, and rhythms. They invent new words and sounds. They mix a sense of word play with sharp observation, sensory awareness and fantasy. With encouragement and appreciation they will happily share their wealth.[3]

Donald Durell advocates the use of writing as an aid to reading progress. He states, "The child's first urge is to write and not read and we haven't taken advantage of this fact."[4]

One way teachers of kindergarten through second grade children can meet the need for early writing experiences is through use of a writing center. The writing center at these levels serves a different function than centers for older children who write more fluently and are ready for editing skills. The center at the primary level provides opportunities for children to put their thoughts in print. This could be accomplished by dictating to an adult or older student. By the end of first grade, some students are ready for independent center work, however, many will still need individualized help. The writing center should provide opportunities for both individual writing and dictation.

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[2]Hall, p. 585.

[3]Chenfeld, Mimi. Teaching Language Arts Creatively. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, Inc., 1978, p.

[4]Graves, Donald H. "Balance the Basics: Let Them Write." New York: Ford Foundation, p. 4.

The following is a description of how to set up a writing center at the primary level.

II. Physical Setting and Organization

The writing center should be located in a corner or a section of the room indicated as a special area. It should remain open enough to make it visible to the teacher and inviting to the children. Kindergarten teachers may choose to incorporate writing materials into a "language center." In the early years, children do not separate modes of creative expression. Art materials should also be easily accessible, as early "writing" is often inspired by artistic expression.

The number of children using the writing center at one time can be controlled in various ways. The number of chairs at the table can indicate the limit. A ticket system works well. Library pockets holding color-coded tickets can be located in various centers as well as on a main chart. An empty pocket indicates that a particular center is not available at that time. Some teachers may wish to assign centers to insure that all children participate in each center periodically. If this seems too structured, two periods of the day could be devoted to center time. During one period, children could be assigned to a specific center, and later in the day, another period of time to allow for free choice. This set-up works well for teachers who wish to use parent volunteers at certain centers during specified times. For kindergarten and first grade children, the writing center is an area where a recorder will need to be present. Primary teachers wanting to operate the writing center continuously, must realize that young children make

continuous demands for assistance. In a classroom where two or more adults are present, it may be possible to operate the center in this way with one adult designated as the writing center resource person.

Some teachers, especially those who have limited assistance in their classroom, will want to specify certain times of the day when a person will be available at the writing center. Children who wish to write at other times, should understand that it will be an independent activity. Some students, even at the kindergarten level, will be ready for independent writing. When choosing materials and projects for the writing center, teachers should take into consideration the developmental level and interests of the children. Because these levels vary within a given classroom at this age, they need to be recognized in the individual child and should dictate the types of activities made available in the writing center.

Victor Froese describes the following four stages of student writing, which can be used as guidelines by classroom teachers to determine what the writing center should offer:

1. Writing Readiness

Children at this level, have learned that signs, books, magazines, etc., have writing on them which adults can read. Left to right and front to back orientations are being established. The physical aspect of writing is just developing. Children at this stage of development have a high interest in writing, are very eager to learn and should have many opportunities to write in a variety of media.

2. Dictation

Children at this stage are developing oral language, but still have many obstacles to overcome in recording ideas on paper. Their concept of a sentence is vague. Thought process is lost in the physical labor of the writing task. Individual dictation, group logs and group experience charts should be part of daily activities. Recording children's language serves two basic purposes. First, it provides the most relevant possible materials for beginning reading instruction. Second, it makes instant authorship possible when the child is still acquiring skills for independent writing. It is important at this stage of development to accept children's dictations and record them exactly. The words spoken to the teacher or to another adult are part of the creative act. Children should not be questioned specifically; spontaneous expression is what is sought, not responses to what adults want to hear. Use statements like "Tell me about your picture." or "Tell me a story." Later, when children are able to write on their own, this early respect for thoughts will help to nourish the growth of creativity. It is very important that volunteer recorders be familiar with this procedure.

3. Independent Writing

Three criteria are necessary for independent writing: 1) Children must have sufficient use of the language. 2) They must be able to print the letters of the alphabet. 3) They must be able to associate letters with speech sounds. Children at this stage of development require much assistance and patience. They can express their thoughts but feel inadequate about writing them in a recognizable fashion. They will likely feel inhibited by a

lack of spelling knowledge and will need extra guidance in this area. However, spelling correctness is not emphasized at this level of the writing process. The focus in creative writing for young children is on the expression of personal feelings. Mechanics come when writing skills are more advanced. Writing centers for children at this level of development should allow for the varied ability levels, and an adult resource person should still be available to the children for certain periods of time.

4. Language Experimentation

Children at this stage have reached the concrete operational level. They are able to view concepts in different ways. They are ready to do a lot of experimentation and take responsibility for their own and each other's editing. The writing center for children at this stage can be used independently, but should incorporate the three stages of the writing process: prewriting, composing, and editing. The prewriting phase could be accomplished with the total class when the center is introduced. Purpose for writing and the designated audience for the finished product should be established at this time.[5]

III. Materials

The writing center in a K - 2 classroom should be rich with materials arranged in a neat, attractive way. Well-defined areas of storage will encourage children to return materials. This can be accomplished by drawing out shapes of items to be used or placing a picture or piece of the material on the container in which it should be placed. Heavy cardboard containers designed for shoe

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[5]Froese, Victor. "Understanding Writing." Language Arts, October, 1978, p. 811-15.

storage in closets can be purchases for reasonable prices at discount stores. These containers can be used for storing supplies such as paper, magazines, etc. Dishpans or baskets can also be used.

The following materials are suggested for use in the writing center. All materials need not be available at one time, but variety is important to the young child.

1. Paper for writing or drawing:
   - manuscript paper
   - story paper
   - unlined paper
   - construction paper
   - chart paper

2. Writing tools:
   - pencils
   - felt-tipped markers
   - crayons
   - colored pencils
   - ballpoint pens
   - chalk and small slates

3. Other items:
   - pictures
   - postcards
   - magazine pictures
   - posters
   - whole magazines
   - scissors
   - paste
   - paper punch
   - stapler
   - word lists and picture dictionaries
   - typewriter
   - tape recorder
   - stamp pad and alphabet letters

IV. Teacher's Role

In a learning-centered classroom, the teacher becomes a resource person and facilitator. A teacher who wishes to set up a writing center should:

1. Be a listener.

   Become alert to young children's speech. Listen to children in a variety of situations.

2. Be interested and encouraging.

   Praise efforts and provide time for children to share work.

3. Be ready to record.

   Carry a small pad and pencil or a clip board to record children's remarks, chants, and stories.

4. Be adept and careful at formulating and reformulating. Encourage each child to express feelings. In most cases, young children's writing should be recorded as stated.

5. Be aware of traditional and cultural uses of speech. During times of creativity it is best not to correct speech or grammar. At a later time, the correct form can be modeled.

6. Incorporate parent cooperation. Parent involvement and education are important parts of a successful writing program. A meeting informing parents of the philosophy of your total educational program should include a discussion about creativity and the importance of encouraging and recording verbal expression. Parents can then be called upon to volunteer time to help in the classroom as a recorder at the writing center.

V. Evaluation

In order for the writing center to be successful, evaluation of all aspects of the program is necessary. Evaluation of the center should include looking at the interest shown by the children, appropriateness of tasks to their abilities and interests, arrangement of supplies and materials and location of the center in the classroom. Feedback from children and parent volunteers should be encouraged. Evaluation of young children's progress in writing is a difficult task. Individual folders of writing should be kept along with a record sheet on which progress, problems and comments can be written after working with children in the writing center.

Activities For the (K-2) Primary Writing Center

The following ideas can be used in a writing center for primary children.

1. Make a word mobile using: color words, foods, wild animals, farm animals.

   Correlate the activity with a science or social studies unit.

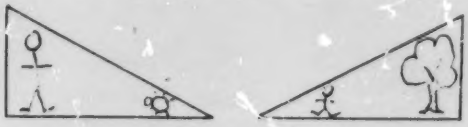
   Older children could make individual mobiles; younger children could add one item to a class mobile.

2. Make a rhyming dictionary.

   Children can work individually or in teams doing a page for the class book by writing and illustrating words following certain rhyming patterns. (at, ick, og, etc.)

3. Make big and bigger pictures.

   Read "What is Big?" from Sounds of Numbers by Bill Martin, Jr. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston.) Talk about things that are bigger and smaller than children. At the writing center, place diagonally cut paper. Children who wish to draw themselves as the biggest object begin on the tall end and vice versa. Have children print the names of the objects under the pictures.



4. Make "Teeny Tiny Books."

   Place a variety of commercial note cards at the writing center for beginning writers to use for short stories.

5. Use the Touch Box.

   Using an ordinary shoe box, cut a hole in the front of the box. big enough for a child to reach inside and feel the object. Sew or staple a sock around the hole. The teacher or the children could contribute objects to the box. Place the box in the

writing center. Depending on the ability of the children, tney could write the name of the object on a card, write the beginning letter of the object, or a description of the object.

6. Rewrite from models.

   Choose a nursery rhyme and write it in two different ways. Make a new ending to a familiar fairy tale, or change the lyrics of a familiar song.

7. Try the "Friday" Box.

   A special box or other receptacle is placed in the writing center on the designated day. During the day children can deposit stories or poems to be shared at a special time.

8. Make a "Mail Box."

   A teacher's mail box can serve a similar purpose. Children write letters, stories, poems, draw pictures, etc., and place them in a special box for only the teacher to read.

9. Other ideas to use:

   Story titles
   Story starters
   Pretend you are...(A pencil for example)
   Finishing sentences:
   Rain sounds like_____.
   Rain is_____.
   I hate_____.
   I feel lonely when_____.
   I'm scared when_____.

   "Is" books:
   Happiness is_____.
   Green is_____.
   Big is_____.

   Color books (illustrations and labels for objects of one color or several colors)

   Alphabet books (could be individual books or a class book for each letter of the alphabet)

   Shape books (book made in the shape of subject of the book)

Writing Labs and Learning Centers Grades 3-5

I. Definitions

In the intermediate grades, three through five, writing labs and learning centers are interrelated. The writing lab is merely conferencing time made available by learning centers for students to receive extra help from an adult director or an older student. The lab is in session only when the director is available. The writing centers are, on the other hand, always available for students to use and write at any time; they are ongoing activities for individual work. Together, the writing lab and writing centers form a part of the writing program of a school. Of course, other opportunities for writing exist within the content areas of socail studies and science as well as the spelling and reading curriculum.

A learning center can be effective in offering a child relief from a straight classroom situation. Many students need this extra

stimulation and motivation, a chance to move, a chance to work in a different mode, a chance to be on their own and a change of pace. The approach can help the teacher individualize and increase student learning proficiency, improve a child's self-image and feeling of independence and improve the student's view of school as a fun and successful place to be.

II. Setting

Sectioning a part of the classroom into a writing center involves only the positioning of existing furniture so that a table and chairs and storage of materials are available to the students. Many types of dividers can be used to separate the writing center from the quiet area. Depending upon the teacher's creativity, cardboard boxes, posters or cloth banners may be used as dividers. To store supplies, boxes covered with decorated contact paper, files, cubbies, shoe holders with pockets, as well as plastic storage containers from the store could be used.

The materials and organization will help determine the physical set up of the learning center, as will the available furniture (or lack of it) and classroom space. A round table could have a divider making four parts for four separate units of activities within each open area. Other materials and sequential organization may require a bulletin board with pockets for papers, shelves for materials or rugs and pillows to sit on. Learning center decor depends on the teacher's creativity.

III. Materials

In the writing center, the students should have chairs and a table big enough to offer a large enough free surface to write

comfortably. Supplies should be at hand, yet displayed or stored neatly. The teacher could include several types and sizes of lined paper, drawing paper, tape recorders and cassettes, rulers, possibly a typewriter, a stamp pad, alphabet stamps, dictionaries and thesauri. It is optional for the teacher to supply the pencils, erasers and markers or have the students bring their own with them when they come to work at the center. A colorful cardboard design on a bulletin board or cardboard carrels made by the teacher or students could add interest and excitement to the center as well.

The writing center will need a storage box or shelves where the teacher keeps exciting or intriguing objects to be used for specific story ideas: Snoopy puppets, shells, a bird's nest, etc. A hanger or hook could be used for various word charts, either teacher or student made, that include lists of days, months, foods, numbers, names or vocabulary donated by students who have finished a report and wish to share their ideas and word lists to help others. The teacher may make tapes directing students to think and write about various topics, choose pictures with appropriate questions written on a card or asked on a cassette tape, or mount poems, newspaper clippings on colored paper, to be read and discussed with another student.

IV. Teacher Role

The teacher's role in a writing centered classroom is an encouraging, enthusiastic facilitator, who creates an atmosphere where writing is a natural and expected activity. Teacher-made bulletin boards, displays of student writing and the responses it has generated are conducive to this writing atmosphere. Helping

students develop their writing skills by helping them match their thoughts and feelings more exactly to the words they write, the teacher provides for all students of varied interests and abilities in the materials and suggestions offered. The teacher is also responsible for planning, creating materials, organizing and setting up the structure, as well as introducing the writing center and lab to the students. In order to be comfortable with this program, the teacher must be in control of this total experience, taking special care to involve all students in the center. The teacher must be aware of changing needs of students, and adapt the writing center accordingly. The teacher needs to let the students know the behavior expected of them as they work in the center or lab, as well as the quality of writing expected from them. The students will accept the responsibility of keeping the center neat and clean and returning supplies for use by the next child. With class discussion, the students can help formulate rules governing use and sharing of materials.

A writing lab is an excellent vehicle for the teacher to use in involving parents in the child's learning. It can benefit both parent and classroom. The writing lab can only be conducted when an adult or older student is available to assist students with writing problems. The lab helper or assistant encourages the student to follow the three processes in writing - prewriting, composing, and editing - and helps the student complete these correctly. This is an opportunity for students to confer with an adult for immediate help on any problems they may have in writing. Nevertheless, the teacher must also be available to aid the parent and students throughout the writing lab. The teacher needs to develop record keeping,

evaluation materials and a procedure to use them.

V. Procedure

When organizing a learning center environment, the teacher should proceed slowly to allow both himself and students to adapt to a new set of experiences and rules. Start with only one center, set the academic goals to be achieved, focusing on a few skills at a time, and collect and prepare appropriate materials. These materials must have variety and be on several academic levels to be beneficial to each child in the classroom. After getting materials and supplies, the teacher must plan and organize the sequence of the activities as she wants the children to work through. She must have clear and concise written directions to augment any oral directions that may have been given in introducing the center. A writing center could be either a composition developing center or a writing skills center or a combination of both. A teacher with extra room might wish to have two separate centers, one for composition and one for skills.

Incorporating the Writing Process in a Writing Center

The writing process involves three stages of development: prewriting, composing and editing (revising or proofreading). It is our feeling that these steps should be included in a composition writing center.

Prewriting helps the child make use of experiences, memories, feelings and attitudes as well as stimulating new and related ideas, words, images and attitudes to motivate and initiate a flow of writing. This prewriting is often, within a regular classroom situation, accomplished by the teacher and class sharing activity, listing

vocabulary and gathering ideas. In the writing center, the prewriting activities may be accomplished either individually or as a small group sharing activity. The prewriting section of the center will have various objects, pictures, poems, newspaper articles and art supplies to stimulate activities directed toward writing. For example, the child may follow written directions to use an object (baseball, teddy bear) and then write a list of feelings or words that remind him of this activity. He may be directed to draw a picture or make an art project, listen to music on a tape and then be directed to make a thematic word chart or make sentences relating to the activity. These could be shared and further words and ideas added. Another method would be a cassette tape of teacher recorded messages and directions for the child or small group of children to follow in the prewriting. The students may wish to tape record their words, ideas and sentences and later edit the tape to make their own thematic word chart to be used when writing their composition.

Various semantic and word charts for ongoing social studies and science activities and lessons to stimulate writing might also be kept in the prewriting section of the center. The final directions would help the child understand the type of writing expected from her, i.e., repeater stories or fantasy, and give samples or motivation for this as well as inform the student about his audience and its background. The student could be given a choice of audiences or a series of different audiences. In the composition section of the writing center, the child uses his prewriting information, sentences and word chart to write his

rough draft. Rules of courtesy will be of utmost importance and stressed at this time to emphasize the importance of concentration while writing.

The editing section of the writing center will include revision and proofreading. The child will be given a card or tape cassette and follow specific directions using sample sentences to demonstrate what to look for in her writing. After proofreading by herself, she will be directed to ask a friend to read the composition aloud. Together they make corrections until reading is smooth and makes sense to both. The corrected draft is then taken to the teacher for a writing conference or to the writing lab director. The child reads her composition, explains her corrections and they confer over suggestions for the final draft for publication. The consideration of the audience and the expected response is discussed and clarified. The child must be able to recognize whether or not her message is clear. The composition should be sent or given to the intended audience, preferably with a fairly quick response. For more immediate feedback, a child may elect to read it to the class and have a discussion of this work and intent in writing. This should build up the writer's self confidence and give ideas for writing to classmates who need more encouragement.

The skills section of the writing center offers an excellent opportunity for the teacher to focus practice on skills remediation. The teacher will be aware of general and specific problems the students are having and will make practice sheets, games and activities available in this part of the center. Later the correct usage will be reinforced in the writing process as well, e.g., if errors in

punctuation or tense are occuring in the composition, the teacher will make activities correcting these, following a group lesson and review or reteaching. This way the students recognize that these same skills are needed in the writing of their stories.

VI. Record Keeping and Evaluation

A very important step is planning the record keeping and evaluation of the learning center and its activities. Individual record keeping should be very simple and give quick information to both the teacher and child regarding the student's participation and progress. This information can help her discover areas of weakness requiring more teaching and learning experience.

The kind of writing will necessitate different types of evaluation. A specific criticism on a factual or informative article is more easily accepted and assimilated by a child than the same type of feedback on his expressive writing. In his expressive writing, the child has taken a greater risk, revealing his nature and consciousness, and his feelings and self concept may be easily hurt, seriously inhibiting his future writing. Therefore, the teacher should exhibit a very positive and gentle attitude in evaluating creative writing. The teacher's attitude should be one of respect both for the student and the effort he has made in creating and correcting his work. He should be praised for accepting the responsibility of editing his own work and encouraged to see this as an integral part of the writing process.

Record keeping is essential for both teacher and child to be aware of progress. Recording information on an individual chart for each child as well as keeping samples of the child's writing in

her own writing folder will help demonstrate growth in writing and be available for parent conference if needed. During evaluation, the teacher should note the type of error being made and use this information diagnostically for specific instruction on the skill as well as providing particular experiences to practice the new skill and to use it in purposeful writing, either individually or as a group review activity. These could be incorporated in the skills section of the writing center as well, for a more effective correlation between the two centers. Equally important is evaluation of the learning center itself to identify its effectiveness and add or change goals or materials to achieve the greatest success with the center. Student evaluation and suggestions can provide helpful imput to improve and devise new centers.

A. Activities for the Writing Labs and Learning Centers, Grades 3-5

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Communicating ideas in a variety of contexts is at the heart of writing. The following ideas for topics and prewriting activities are included in support of this statement.

Dinosaur Land (Idea from Good Apple Guide to Learning Centers)

Directions: Read the directions written on the card or taped on a cassette. Listen for and note the purpose and audience of your story.

Prewriting:

1. Look at a filmstrip on dinosaurs.
2. Read Danny and the Dinosaur by Sid Hoff.
3. Draw a picture of a dinosaur or make a sculpture or diorama showing the dinosaur you will write about.
4. Think about what the dinosaur looks like, what it eats, what his activities and problems are and what makes him happy.
5. Write your story.
6. If you like you can make it into a shape book and draw illustrations
7. You may make a dinosaur report to class or think of another activity about dinosaurs you would like to do.

_____

_____

The Musician

Directions: Pretend that you are a famous musician. Decide what kind of instrument and music you play.

Prewriting:

1. Draw a picture of the instrument, label the parts, describe it.
2. Draw a picture of you and your band or orchestra.
3. Listen to a recording of your kind of music.
4. Write words and phrases describing your life and music.
5. Describe concerts, long trips, friends, home.

6. Discuss story ideas with a friend.

7. Write your story.

8. You may try to play an instrument or give the class a short concert.

_____

_____

Fantasy Stories

Directions: Think of Nonsense Titles--for fun.

The Rabbit that Roared
The Ladybug that Joined the Zoo
Two Desks on a Walk Through School
The Day My Pencil Went on Strike

Prewriting: 1. Write phrases and words describing the main character.

2. Write ideas telling where they go, how they act and feel.

3. Write some problems that might occur.

4. Write some ways to solve the problems.

5. If you wish, tell your story to a friend.

6. Write your story.

7. Share your story with the class by reading it or making it into a play or TV show.

_____

_____

People Stories

Directions: Think of events that might happen to a boy or girl in real life.

Moving to a New Location
My Friend Runs Away
An Embarrassing Situation
Losing My Notebook and Homework on Test Day

Prewriting: 1. Talk to someone who may know about the experience first hand.

2. Describe feelings that people with the problem would have.

3. Make a diorama of the climax of the story.

4. Write your story.

5. Read your story to the class. Discuss the ideas in it and the way people solved problems.

_____

_____

Sports Stories

Directions: Decide on a sport and whether you want to tell a fiction or non-fiction story. Here are some baseball suggestions.

My Life as a Catcher's Mitt
The Play That Changed the Game

Prewriting: 1. Read baseball cards and day-dream a short while.

2. Think about a time when you played or watched a game.

3. Write a list of vocabulary words that would help to understand the game (i.e., home run, high fly etc.).

4. Play the game at recess.

5. Write your story.

6. Help someone else write a story about this game.

_____

_____

Mystery Stories

Directions: Think of something or someone that is missing, something arranged differently than usual, or a strange phone call or message on paper.

Prewriting: 1. Describe the plot, why the item is missed, or what is in the note.

2. Write ideas describing the location of the story.

3. Describe the people in the story.

4. Write a list of words that are mysterious sounding

synonyms for ordinary words we use (i.e., creep, sneak, in place of walk).

5. Tell the sequence of how the problem is solved.

6. Share your ideas with a friend to get more ideas.

7. Write your story.

8. Illustrate.

9. Read your story to someone using lots of expression in your voice.

_____

_____

Survival Stories

Directions: Pretend you are on a plane that has crashed. Study the type of climate, geography and culture of the crash site.

Prewriting:

1. List climatic, geographical, and cultural information.

2. Write phrases telling how you got there and what condition your companions, the vehicle and you are in.

3. Describe the area (desert, mountian, ocean, quicksand, iceberg, jungle).

4. Find a picture of a similar place and mount it.

5. Write ideas on what you would eat.

6. Tell how you would keep warm and dry.

7. Write several escape plans.

8. Make a diary or journal about your feelings and the problems you meet and solve each day.

Natural Disaster Stories

Directions: Select a natural disaster (i.e., flood, fire, hurricane, tornado, ice storm) and consider its effect on people.

Prewriting:

1. Write a list of words that you think of when you hear of a disaster like the one you have chosen.

2. Read newspaper clippings about a similar disaster.

3. Draw pictures showing these events and feelings.

4. Write phrases and ideas of what might happen to people of different ages during the disaster.

5. Describe rescue equipment and actions.

6. Describe a family and tell the story of what happened to each member.

7. Write and illustrate your story.

_____

_____

Shape Books

Choose a shape or trace from a coloring book one that is the shape of the object that you want to write about. Get all your materials ready (pencils, special shape paper, etc.).

Prewriting: 1. List vocabulary that describes the object.

2. Tell what it does or what it is used for.

3. Write adventures that might happen to it.

4. Read them to a friend and think of a story together.

5. Draw a picture or make a sculpture for your story.

6. Write your story in sequence, with a punch line ending.

_____

_____

Surprise Object Story

Directions: Look in the treasure box, knapsack, or jeans pocket to find an object hidden inside. No one else should see.

Prewriting: 1. Look at the object, think about it, and write a list of words that remind you of the object.

2. Write a description of the object.

3. Write possible uses for the object. Be creative!

4. Write how you feel about the object and why you feel this way.

5. Write a story and illustrate it.

6. Exchange your story with a friend.

_____

_____

Grab Bag Stories

Directions: Reach into the grab bag or box and feel one object. Do not take it out or look at it.

Prewriting:

1. Write about the texture. Is it soft, smooth, squishy?

2. Write words that tell about the shape.

3. List ideas of what the object might be.

4. Be partners with a friend and compare lists.

5. Look at the object to see if your description fits. Cross out the words that do not.

6. Add more words which accurately describe the object.

7. With your partner, write a story about the object that can be shared with the class.

8. Edit the story together.

_____

_____

Newspaper Stories

Directions: Choose a newspaper article from the file and read the story or caption.

Prewriting:

1. While looking at the picture or rereading the story, write all the words that come to your mind.

2. Write words to describe the people or animals in the story.

3. Make a list of words that describe the location.

4. List words that tell what the main characters are like--their feelings and attitudes.

5. Use the main characters and make up a story about them. It can include the news happening or not.

6. Write your story, making sure it is something that could have really happened.

7. Locate when, where, how, who, what in your story.

_____ _____

_____

Research Writing

Directions: Collect books and informative articles needed for your research topic. Arrange writing materials to start note gathering.

Prewriting:

1. Read and skim a story or informative article on the topic, making a list of important information.

2. Describe location, people, or objects needed for the report.

3. Conduct experiments and write notes on procedure and results.

4. Organize the information and make an outline.

5. Write the report.

6. Make posters, filmstrips, or other visuals to go with the topic.

7. Share the report and illustrations with another class.

Book Report Writing

Directions: Decide upon a book that you would like to share with a friend. Take it to the writing center.

Prewriting:

1. Skim over the book. Choose two favorite parts and write about them.

2. Write your reasons for liking the book.

3. Tell about the characters.

4. Write why you think other people will like the story.

5. Give a brief written synopsis of the story.

6. Share with a friend. Let the friend read the story and check if he felt as you expected.

_____

_____

Quick Ideas for Story Starters and Other Writing Activities.

Write about beauty, your town, infinity, etc. using descriptive words and expressing your feelings.
Describe America using classmates' personality characteristics.
Make captions and stories for pictures.
Make pictures for captions and write stories with them.
Write a story based on part of a comic strip.
Use repeater books as models for stories.
Write familiar stories like The Three Bears from another point of view (e.g., "How the Bear Feels").
Write holiday stories (e.g.,"The Ghosts and Magic of Halloween").
Write modern fables.
Write "Just So" stories (e.g.,"How the Tiger Got Its Claws").
Write about an imaginary land and its inhabitants.
Write about a feeling; a happy time, sad time, nervous time.
Write greeting cards.
Write advertisements.
Write brochures for travel.
Write letters--friendly, business, thank you , request.
Fill in forms for mail order purchases, applications, or bank accounts.
Draw and label pictures. (Make a hot rod and write a story for it.)
Write a story or poem as you listen to music.
Make a myth, legend, or tall tale after reading models of these forms.
List similies and make them into a poem.
Write an autobiography or biography using interviews.
Write recipes for food.
Write recipes for a good life.
Write historical fiction--your life if you lived long ago.
Write "talking books" to give to younger children.
Write and explain idioms or proverbs.
Write an address book, thesaurus, or dictionary.
Write ideas for autographs.
Write a story about landing on another planet.
Use the newspaper to write sports stories, editorials, headlines, interviews, weather reports, classified ads, obituaries or wedding announcements.
Write a journal or diary.
Write a menu.
Write a play or skit.

Writing Skills Center Activities

1. Use vocabulary chart words to make pictures.

2. Use vocabulary chart words for making lists of synonyms or antonyms.

3. Make a contraction game or compound word game. Cut the word into puzzle parts to be put back together.

4. Extend a sentence. Start with a noun and verb. Add adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases to make it more complete.

5. Arrange and rearrange sentences, using pictures for subject, verb, and object and arrange several ways. Write sentences for each.

6. Use Dolch phrases and arrange into sentences.

7. Play "Silly Syntax" from Interaction by Moffett.

8. Fill out forms such as bank withdrawals, library card applications, money orders, and restaurant order forms.

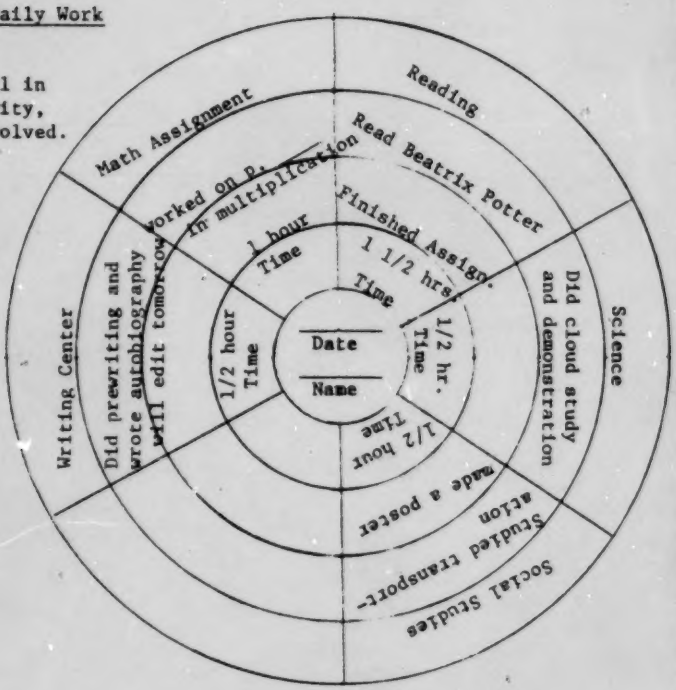
9. Use misspelled words from compositions for a supplementary individualized spelling program or as the class spelling program. Students can practice the words in the air, with a friend, on paper, or at the chalkboard. Write sentences for each word. Find matching word family lists and study. Study with a friend before taking a test.

10. Label word boxes or envelopes "Words I Need to Know" and "Words I Know." Use the words in written sentences to check for retention.

11. Use the skills center for reviewing and relearning correct forms for errors made in composition writing. Oral class reteaching and individual reteaching before assigning projects to use the skill are suggested.

Individual Daily Work Record

Students fill in class, activity, and time involved.



Reading	Art	Science
Math Multiplication 1 hour page ___	Social Sc.	Writing Center
Phy Ed. Learned to play soccer 1 hour	Music	Skills Center

Individual Daily Work Chart

Student fills in activity and writes in accomplishments.

A. List student names on side.
List Skills taught along top.
Key:
skill has not been introduced.. [ ]
skill has been introduced..... [/]
skill has been mastered..... [X]
skill has been reinforced..... [R]

GROUP SKILL CHART

Name	Capitals	Periods	Question Marks	Compound Words	Complete Sentences			
Holly	X R	X	/					
David	X	X		R				

B. INDIVIDUAL SKILL CHART

Name _____

Skill	Date	Activity					
Sentence Structure	X Silly Syntax	Needs help extended sentences					
Punctuation	X Abbrev.	proper noun game needs help					

Independent Composition
Name

Audience
Purpose

	Skill	Need Practice	Improv.	Mastery	Teaching-Learning Needs
PREWRITING	Activity: Looked at dino.fs.			X	
	Activity: Drew a picture of dino.			X	
	Activity: Read Danny and the Dinosaur			X	
	Activity: Listed dinosaur activities		X		Needs a friend to brainstorm words
COMPOSING	Is message clear?		X		
	Is material organized?	X			
	Is audience appropriate? (vice-versa)			X	
EDITING	Sentence Meaning		X		Difficulty with pronouns
	Sentence Structure		X		Put adverbs in correct place
	Punctuation			X	Remembered punctuation *
	Spelling			X	Remembered caps *
	Usage - Tense	X			Need to relearn

(During editing, child and teacher fill out this form together and discuss.)

Student's Name_____

Writing Lab Evaluation and Record Sheet

Date_____

Writing Lab Instructor_____

Summary of Writing Activity Purpose and Audience_____

_____

_____

Student Comment What work did you do? What kind of help did you receive?_____

_____

_____

_____

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Middle School Writing Centers

The middle school teacher, often in a more subject defined classroom, can use learning centers to incorporate writing skills into daily classroom activities. The use of learning centers helps students see that writing is not a separate subject, but that it carries over into all areas, and the middle school teacher will find that extended writing experiences offer more opportunities for one-to-one guidance than the average classroom situation permits. Centers should have levels of difficulty within themselves to challenge the "gifted child" as well as the child needing remedial help. Multi-level activities help the teacher provide a more individualized approach to learning.

Although learning centers should be changed as student interest dictates, the writing lab can remain constant throughout the year. Though pre-writing experiences may be handled in a different setting, work in the writing lab should become an excellent opportunity for students to edit and interact with each other's writings.

Many of the published ideas and techniques for creating writing centers and labs focus on either the elementary or the secondary learning situation, leaving the middle school teacher to adapt from both levels to meet the specialized needs of middle school students. Many of the sample centers presented in this section are adaptations of ideas taken from both the elementary and secondary levels.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Room arrangement, basic to the success of the learning center program, is dictated by the physical situation of each individual classroom setting. However, even the most inflexible classroom can, with imagination, be divided into a variety of activity areas. Many of the guidelines outlined in the elementary section of this guide can be followed by the middle school teacher. With the help of bookcases, packing boxes, table, closets and corners, the teacher can create a classroom refuge, which has privacy and an atmosphere conducive to learning.

MATERIALS

A teacher who uses classroom learning centers encounters problems when displaying materials. The display must give self-explanatory directions, ask questions, present problems, provide models, and give information. Large sheets of packing cardboard which are tri-sectioned so that they will stand by themselves are flexible for posting colorful displays and can be folded for easy storage. Some teachers create tabletop workspace by arranging tables in front of bulletin boards and tacking materials to the board. Display systems will vary depending on the center and its own specific requirements. There are a variety of commercially prepared materials to choose from or the teacher and students can create the center themselves. In some situations, a box of dittoed worksheets may be central to learning center activities, in others audio tapes, records, filmstrips, and pictures will be needed. Resource books such as dictionaries, thesauri and

grammar texts are especially important to add to the list of materials.

PROCEDURE: DEFINING OBJECTIVES

Creating learning centers is not just organizing activities and space; it is developing specific objectives based on pupil assessment. Ideas can be developed from almost any source, once the objectives have been determined and focused in on. Evaluation, both from the teacher as well as the students, as to each center's effectiveness should be an on-going check of the program's success. A good organizational plan will also include materials needed, operational procedures and a continuum of difficulty levels. Students can find a vast variety of subjects to write about if given the proper guidance and prewriting activities. Writing activities related to other classes such as reading, social studies, and even relaxed study hall hobbies will provide many subjects to choose from. The list is endless and teachers will find it easy to create their own list of possible ideas for creating learning centers.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In order to function effectively as a facilitator in a learning center setting, a teacher will need to:

1. Be committed to allowing students to develop their own decision-making skills.
2. Be more concerned with the learning taking place in the classroom than the teaching.
3. Be capable of creating and maintaining an environment for learning that is creatively flexible.
4. Be able to tailor both methods and materials to meet varying student needs and abilities.

5. Be sensitive to the rate of student progress and to the need for immediate and specific reinforcement as the "cap-stone" to project completion.

6. Make time and energy commitments required for consistent evaluation and revision of center activities as necessary to sustain the highest level of student enthusiasm, involvement, and learning.

Learning center teaching is more an attitude on the part of the teacher than a system of teaching. It involves more than just setting up the learning centers, which require a great deal of structure in order to function effectively, but once operational, provide an opportunity for children to work independently at activities tailored to their needs and interests and to evaluate their own progress.

There is a great deal of work involved in designing a creative, functional, self-directed learning center and, initially, the teacher will need to spend much out of class time in preparation. However, once the learning center is operational, students should be able to proceed at their own rate in completion of the learning tasks and in employing and recording the results of the self-checking activities that accompany them. Thus the teacher will be freed of routine instructions, grading, and general record-keeping. This precious "free" time can be used to work with students on an individual, tutorial basis, conferencing, or working with a small group exhibiting homogeneous needs.

Teachers may find the learning-centered approach an excellent opportunity to involve parents. They may be used in a "floating" sense to oversee general classroom activity or stationed at the writing lab/center to guide specific problems.

EVALUATION

Teachers will want to devise their own system for evaluating learning-centered instruction. John Morlan, in his book, Classroom Learning Centers, suggests these points to consider.

1. The evaluation should grow out of carefully constructed, clearly stated, specific objectives.
2. Some diagnostic tests should determine activities at a center. There is no point in having a student work on activities at a skills learning center just because it is there.
3. The evaluation must fit what is being taught and directly concerned with meeting the individual center's objectives.

The student also enters into the evaluation process through reading, editing and commenting on other student's writings. Some guidelines for the student's interaction with their peer's writings are recommended so that students realize the intent of the writing and the audience for whom it is written.

STEPS IN DEVELOPING
A MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARNING CENTER

I. Identify an idea:
   a. From your own classroom experience or inspiration.
   b. From someone else.
   c. From sample centers you have seen.
   d. From professional books on learning centers.
   e. From other books.

II. Adapt it to the needs of your children:
   a. Examine diagnostic data.
   b. How much previous exposure, experience is necessary.
   c. Define your objective.

d. Determine appropriate levels within the center.

e. Decide whether it will be offered as an elective center or as an absolute requirement.

III. Make the center.

IV. Place it in the room.

V. Explain the center.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR USE IN A LEARNING CENTER/WRITING LAB ENVIRONMENT

almanacs
magazines, catalogues
blank booklets
chalk, pencils, pens
comic books
commercial spelling kits
crossword puzzles
dictionaries
encyclopedias
extra skill practice pages
felt material, flannel board
film strips
games--language games, writing games
overhead projector
listening post
newspapers
variety of paper
phonograph, records
picture file
puppet theatre
recipe box of creative writing suggestions
rhyming dictionary
slide projector, slides
student magazines--Scope, Read, Voice
tape recorders and tapes
telephone directory
text for grammar and mechanics usuage
thesaurus
transparencies and markers
typewriter
variety of literature books to use as models

ART SUPPLIES

drawing paper		masking tape	railroad board	tagboard
glue		paste	scissors	3X5 note cards
markers		pocket charts	stapler	

CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

Does the activity.....

_____fit the growth need of the students?

_____provide for a specific student-centered need?

_____fit as one part of a plan of balanced learning experiences?

_____include clear, concise instructions which are not dependent on teacher explanations?

_____specify all reference and resource materials necessary for project completion?

_____provide for growth in study skill usage?

_____serve some valid educational purpose such as providing specific practice and drill, supplying evaluative material for diagnosis or extending learning experiences?

_____attract and interest students?

_____include evaluative criteria that is meaningful to students?

A. MODEL OUTLINES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL WRITING CENTERS

1. Critical Reading

Skills: Critical reading, vocabulary enrichment, word usage, creative writing.

Objectives:

Central Purpose: Students should be able to recognize and interpret hidden "intent" or "inference" in written communication.

Specific Purposes:

Level I: Students can recognize and isolate words intended to create emotional appeal.

Level II: Students can associate recognized intentions and inferences with the human needs and emotions to which they appeal and are able to create like appeals through written communications.

Level III: Students are able to make personal judgments about the worth and morality of attempts to deceive through the medium of public advertising.

Tools and Materials:

Four or five large attractive magazine ads, mounted and displayed on a bulletin board or protected in acetate sheets and placed in a box or envelope; paper, pencils, scissors, paste, plain and colored construction paper; large, empty board space where students can display original ads.

Operational Procedure

Introduction of Center Area and Directions for Use:

1. Discuss general purpose and use of advertising; go over all directions.

2. Point out art supplies and empty board space for original displays.

3. Ask students to make suggestions about how original ads may be used for evaluation purposes. Schedule a future time to make final decisions related to this.

Procedures:

Level I: Ask student to choose words from the ads that make the reader want to "buy" and list them on paper.

or He may write a sentence about each ad, telling how it makes him feel.

optional A student may design her own ad for an imaginary product, place it on the board and see how many "buyers" the ad attracts.

evaluation Written work; optional work, group decision.

Level II: Ask student to read ads and make a list of the human emotions or needs to which they appeal.

or He may make up three ads of his own which use the same psychology or emotional appeal as three of the displayed ads.

optional Same as Level I.

evaluation Written work; optional work, group decision.

Level III: Ask student to read ads and write a sentence explaining the real intent of each ad.

or Take a position: "With which of the following statements do you agree? Write a paragraph to explain your choice."

1. Advertisers should be required by law to be totally honest; they should not be permitted to use subtle deceit to sell products to the general public.

2. America is a "free-press" society. Advertisers ought to be allowed to print anything they wish; if the public is deceived, it is its own fault for not buying cautiously.

optional Same as Level I.

evaluation Written work; optional, group decision.

2. Vocabulary Enrichment

Objectives:

Central Purpose: Students should be able to use descriptive words with increasing sensitivity and preciseness.

Specific Purposes:

Levels I and II: Students can demonstrate sensitivity and preciseness in the use of adjectives by matching descriptive words with the real-life situations which they best describe.

Level III: Students can demonstrate skill in making word associations and drawing inferences by choosing from many possible life-situations the one best described by each of 10 sentences.

Tools and Materials:

Six or seven large, colorful pictures demonstrating human emotion (#1-7); bulletin board space or substitute; pencil, paper, 3X5 cards, tacks or tape; six or seven envelopes--one attached behind or below each picture;

Level I: 10-12 word cards bearing adjectives which can be associated with chosen pictures, i.e., angry, sad, embarrassing, disgusted, overjoyed, anxious, impatient, excited, etc.

Level II: 10-12 word cards--same as Level I with more difficult words, i.e., furious, harassed, exuberant, amorous, exhilarated, implacable, arrogant, etc.

Level III: 10-15 cards bearing sentences which describe, by inference, the emotions displayed by the pictures, i.e., "Serious consequences follow infraction of rules." "Feelings are not often camouflaged by facial expression." "Ingenious minds excel in clever design;" etc.

Operational Procedure:

Introduction of Center area and directions for use:

1. Locate all materials and demonstrate use of word and sentence cards.
2. Give directions for adding cards to envelopes.

3. Ask students to think, as they work at the center, about ways in which the envelopes of collected word cards might be used to evaluate skills in preciseness of word choice and in word sensitivity. Set a future time for making suggestions.

Procedures:

Level 1: Ask student to match a Level I word card with the mounted picture it best describes and explain his choices to a friend.

or She may number the pictures on paper and list the words she matched with each picture; discuss choices with friend or teacher.

required He must, on a 3X5 card, write an additional word of his own for each picture and insert it in the envelope below each corresponding picture.

Level II: Same as Level I, substituting Level II word cards.

Level III: Same as Level I and II, substituting Level III sentence cards.

evaluation All levels: Group decision.

3. Word Usage

Objectives:

General Objective: Students should be able to recognize and classify words according to their uses in the context of a sentence.

Specific Objectives:

Level I: Students can recognize and use verbs and adjectives in context.

Levels II and III: Students can recognize and classify nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs according to their uses in context.

Tools and Materials:

Level I: Duplicated sheets of a list of 10 simple nouns.

Levels II and III: Duplicated sheets bearing the following paragraph: Horskly, the minkled gooks kittled. The murks skorked the grunchies and rittled the morks. The runches gloored skatily, and the grimped gottles griffled. The mak mootled mortily.

All: pencils, crayons (markers), paper.

Operational Procedure:

Introduction of Center area and directions for use:

1. Define noun, verb, adjective, adverb and discuss examples.
2. Identify materials and read all directions; answer any questions.

Procedures:

Level I: Ask student to locate the duplicated list of 10 nouns. Before each noun, he is to write a descriptive word that makes sense. After each noun, he is to add an action word that makes sense. Then he should read each phrase to himself.

or She may write 3 original sentences, each containing a noun, verb, and adjective. She may classify the words by circling all verbs and underlining all adjectives.

evaluation Written work--number of words properly classified.

Level II: Ask student to obtain duplicated nonsense story. He must classify all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs by using a color code of his own. (Remind him to add a color key, so that his classification may be understood.)

or She may write five original sentences, using real words, and classify all four kinds of words by listing them under the headings NOUN--VERB--ADJECTIVE--ADVERB at the bottom of his paper.

evaluation Written work--number of words properly classified.

Level III: Same as Level II

or Student may compose original story of nonsense words and classify nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs by any method he chooses to devise.

evaluation Written work--number of words properly classified.

4. Creative Writing

Objectives:

General Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate skills in association, transference and writing style by translating, either from reading or memory, a fable or folktale into a

present-day journalistic-style news or feature story.

Tools and Materials:

An abbreviated form of the story "Rip Van Winkle" and a model report of that story as it might appear in the news or feature section of a local newspaper if "Rip" had been discovered just this week. Duplicated copies of a similar folktale, paper, pencil. (Duplicating masters are optional.)

Operational Procedure:

Introduction of Center and directions for use:

1. Indentify materials, review directions.
2. Discuss "journalistic" style--as compared with ordinary prose. Mention the key words Who--What--When--Where and added items of human and public interest (and opinion in feature stories).
3. Discuss how the optional activity might be best accomplished Set a time for those who choose that activity to make final decisions.

Procedures:

All Levels: Ask students to read abbreviated story of "Rip Van Winkle" and its corresponding model of a modern-day news or feature story.

Ask him then to read a second similar story, chosen by the teacher, and write a corresponding modern-day news or feature account of the story in journalistic style.

or She may do the same assignment using a folktale of her own choosing.

optional Any student may submit his story for publication in a local class newspaper. The process of collecting, preparing and duplicating should be done by student committee.

5. Functional Writing--Letters

Time: Unlimited, number of students: 2-4.

Instructional Objectives: The students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of correct letter form by writing a letter.

Materials: Note cards with ideas for letters on them, paper, pencils, and envelopes, samples of a business letter, a friendly letter and an addressed envelope on the center. (Optional; envelopes and a catalogue to order items from.)

Directions:

1. Choose a card from the particular type of letter you wish to write.
2. Write the letter that it tells you to write.
3. Follow the correct form for the type of letter you are writing.(see the sample.)
4. Proofread your letter, then address an envelope if an envelope is provided, Otherwise, draw a mock envelope on your paper and address it correctly.) Follow the sample provided.
5. Deposit letter in "mail box".

Suggested Ideas:

Business Letters

1. Order a quart of pistachio ice cream to be delivered daily for a week for a friend who just had his tonsils out.
2. Order one gold toothpick costing $22.00 for your uncle.
3. Order a pair of ice skates, size 15 EEE, for your pet gorilla.
4. Order a case of cough drops to be delivered to a giraffe who has a sore throat and lives at the county zoo.
5. Ask a travel agency to send you folders on your favorite vacation spot.
6. Write to an author of a gardening book for information about planting and raising house plants.
7. If a catalog is provided, order a chosen item for someone and have it personalized.
8. Order three separate clothing items from a local department store.

Condolence

1. To a friend who ate nine hotdogs at a picnic.

2. To a centipede who has blisters.

3. To a friend who has developed laryngitis just before he is to play the leading part in a school play.

4. To a tiger who has lost his stripes.

5. To a friend who recently lost the student council election.

Congratulations

1. To a friend who just received the lead in the school play.

2. To a friend who just won the national spelling bee.

3. To someone who has become the brother/sister of triplets.

4. To a friend who just won the Reader's Digest contest and received $500.

Thank You

1. To your aunt who sent you a sweater, two sizes too small.

2. To your grandmother who sent you a cat and you're allergic to it.

3. To a friend who sent you a dozen roses for your birthday.

4. To the room mother who sponsored the class ski trip.

Invitation

1. Invite a friend to your birthday party.

2. Invite the new girl in class to your costume party.

3. Invite the neighborhood dogs to your pet's birthday party.

Friendly Letter

1. Pretend you are your pet or one of your toys and write a letter to another pet or toy about yourself.

2. You are a visitor from the planet Xelox. Write a letter to your friends on Xelox about the planet Earth.

3. Pretend you are a country mouse on vacation in the city. Write a letter to your friend in the country.

4. Write a letter to your cousin telling them about all your family's happenings.

Evaluation: The teacher will collect the letters and read them to see if the correct form has been followed. The student may file them in their individual file folder and present them at the time of conference.

6. Descriptive Writing

Time: Twenty minutes, number of students: 3-4.

Instructional Objectives: Students will attempt to write with precision so that a reader will be able to draw according to the description.

Materials: Paper; several, varied, unusual designs on separate sheets of construction paper.

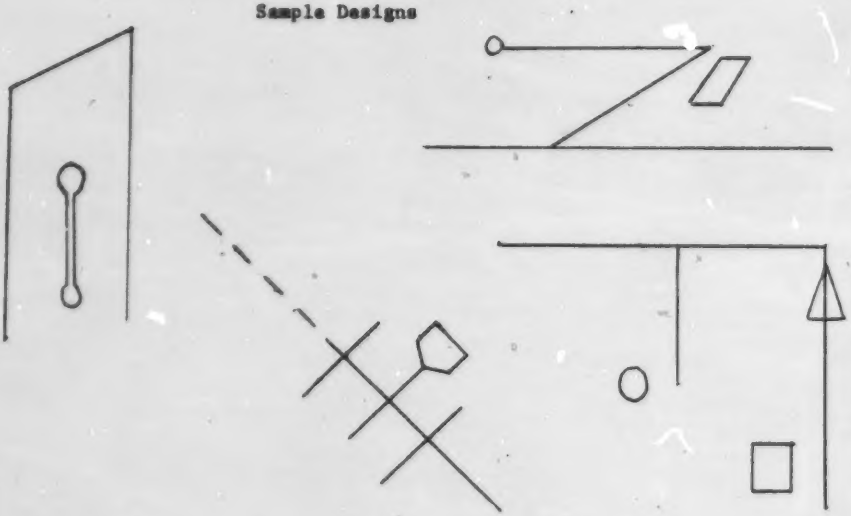
Directions:

1. Select one of the sheets of paper with the varied designs on them.

2. You are given the assignment of writing a description of what is on the paper. Do not worry too much about exact lengths of lines or degrees of angles. Your verbal description will then be given to someone else to attempt to duplicate the design according to your description.

Evaluation: The test of success for your description will be a comparison of the two figures. For that reason, please put the number of your drawing on the outside of your description with your name.

Sample Designs



7. Writing With the Newspaper Classifieds

Time: 20-30 minutes, number of students: 1-3.

Instructional Objectives: Using the classified section of the newspaper, students will create stories related to the ads.

Materials: Paper; set of cards "The Classifieds" (Wisconsin Committee: Newspaper in Education, Milwaukee, WI.); classified section from the newspaper.

Directions: Students are to pull out one of the self-directed cards, identify the number of the card on their paper, and follow the card's directions.

Two Sample Cards From "The Classifieds"

Card #1

Find five different kinds of jobs advertised in the Employment classified ads. Try to find one job from each of these categories: clerical, technical, professional, domestic, sales.

Write a short paragraph about each job, telling what you think a typical day would be like.

Fasten the ads to your sheet.

Card #2

With a friend:
Find a Classified ad that you think has an interesting story behind it.

Discuss what might have happened before the ad was placed, and what might happen now.

Write out the "Before" story. Your friend will write the "After" story.

---

8. Eliminating Wordiness in Writing

Time: Thirty minutes, number of students: 1-2 (Advanced).

Instructional Objectives: The students should be able to learn the process of eliminating unnecessary words in writing.

Materials: Paper, copy of composition to rewrite and edit for conciseness.

Directions: The following paragraph was taken from an essay by Bertrand Russell. Unfortunately, while being transferred from book to paper, it fell into a puddle and soaked up a great deal of dirty water. Your task is to wring it out. You can easily squeeze out over one hundred words without losing any of the thought. When you have done so, place the paper in the finished paper packet.

Composition

It seems that history, in every country, is taught in such a way as to have a tendency to magnify or glorify that country: children can be said to learn to believe that it is their own country which has always been in the right and almost always victorious, that it is their own country which has produced almost all the great men, and that their own country is in all respects quite superior to all other countries. Since these are the sort of beliefs that tend to be flattering, it is obvious that they are quite easily absorbed, and that they are hardly ever dislodged from instinct by the acquisition of later knowledge. As an example of this tendency, let me give this illustration. Take the battle of Waterloo, for example. The facts about the battle of Waterloo are known in great detail and with minute accuracy; but it seems that the way they are taught in elementary schools will tend to be widely different in England, France and Germany. The ordinary English boy seems to imagine that the Prussians played hardly any part; on the other hand, the ordinary German boy tends to imagine that Wellington was practically defeated when the day was retrieved by Blutcher's gallantry. If the facts were taught accurately and exactly in both of these countries, it is certain that national pride would not be fostered to the same degree or extent, that neither of the two nations would feel quite so certain of obtaining victory in the event that war should come about, and that the willingness to fight would be diminished, at least to some extent.

Evaluation: Students are to count the number of words used in their version of the composition and the teacher is to review papers to check that none of the main thoughts were left out or that it is as concise as possible.

9. Library Skills

Time: Twenty minutes, number of students: 1.

Instructional Objectives: The student should be able to answer the questions with the use of the almanac, dictionary, and atlas.

Materials:

1. Take a piece of paper.

2. Use one of the three books to answer the questions.

3. After you have found the answers, check your answers to see how many you have gotten correct.

4. If you have missed any, see if you can find the correct answers.

5. Put your papers in the folder on the back.

Questions:

Almanac

1. Where was John Adams born?

2. When is Citizenship Day?

3. Who was Lou Henry?

4. What state produced the most eggs in 1962?

5. How old is your favorite actress?

6. What is the tallest building in New Orleans, LA?

7. What is the official church of Greece?

8. What is the population of Denmark?

Dictionary

1. What part of speech is the word chronic?

2. What is the plural of mongoose?

3. How many syllables are in the word utilitarian?

4. What is a spelunker?

5. What is the correct spelling--gizzerd or gizzard?

6. What is a synonym for abundant?

7. What country is the word kindergarten from?

8. What does bonanza mean?

9. Is a limerick a kind of soft drink?

10. Can a centaur be found in a zoo?

Atlas

1. What is the population of your community?

2. In what coun y is Alamosa, Colorado?

3. What is the area of Japan?

4. What is the population of Belgium?

5. What continents border the Indian Ocean?

6. What states does the Hudson River flow through?

7. What town is directly west of St. Louis, Missouri?

8. Is Springfield in Massachusetts?

9. What is the area of New Mexico?

Extended ideas: The questions could be mixed up so students would have to determine where to locate the information. Students could be asked to draw contrast/comparison statements as a result of their research.

Evaluation: Each student checks his own paper. The teacher reviews the papers and notes the completeness of the answers.

10. Etymology

Time: 20-30 minutes, number of students: 3.

Instructional Objective: The students will discover English words that are related to original Latin and Greek words and other countries.

Materials: A cardboard box with bottle dividers, index cards, construction paper.

Directions:

1. Take the index cards from the box and read the words.

2. Place each card in the appropriate box by comparing that word to the underlined words above each box. Compare them using sounds and definitions. Use the dictionary.

3. When all the cards have been filed, take the cards, one by one, out of the boxes and turn them over to see if you were correct.

4. Find your score by counting the number wrong and subtracting that from 57.

Examples of word origins and words:

Circum (round) - circus, circumference, circle (L)
Officium (service) - official, officer, office (L)
Copia - (abundance) - copy, copyist, copied (L)
Novus (new) - new, novelle, novel, novelty (L)
Sol (sun) - solstice, solar (L)
Navis (to flow) - navigate, navigator, navy (L)
Aqua (water) - aquarium, aquamarine (L)
Helios (sun) - helium, heliograph (Gr)
Naus (to flow) - nautical (Gr)
Hemi (half) - hemisphere (Gr)
Aster (Star) - astrology, asteroid (Gr)
Wedd (pledge) - engage, disengage (French)
Tred (draw) - track, trigger (Dutch)
Gage (pledge) - engage, disengage (French)
Tele (far) - television, telegraph, telescope (Gr)
Atmos (vapor) - atmosphere, atmospheric (Gr)
Chrono (time) - chronometer, chronology (Gr)
Ge or Geo (earth) - geography, geology (Gr)
____graph or _____graphy (writing) - telegraph (Gr)
Ion (gone) - ionosphere (Gr)
____naut (sailor) - astronaut (Gr)
Peri (around) - perimeter, periscope (Gr)
Phot or photo (light) - photograph, telephoto (Gr)
Sphere (ball) - geosphere (Gr)
Meter (measure) - thermometer, kilometer (Gr)
Scope (seeing) - telescope, gyroscope (Gr)
Fort (strong) - fortitude, fortress (Gr)
Phone (sound) - phoneme, telephone (Gr)
Topo (place) - topography (Gr)

Extended ideas:

Have student take a sheet of paper. Divide the original words into three groups: Latin, Greek, and others. Place the words in three separate boxes.

Have each student take four words from each box, write the words on the paper derived from each word. Encourage students to use the dictionary for reference.

Students can check each other's papers, share their findings with the class, or a group of students can compile lists of words derived from a given Latin or Greek word and place them on posters or bulletin boards for all to share.

Evaluation:

The students will be evaluated on their vocabulary skills and on their ability to follow directions.

Source: Pathways to Imagination. Angela S. Reeke and James L. Laffey.

11. Functional Writing--Grammar

Time: 15-20 minutes, number of students: 3-4.

Instructional Objective:

To help in understanding the seven parts of speech and increase word usage, both oral and written. Introduce the learning center by telling the class the story of Pandora. This will help explain the title, "Pandora's Boxes."

Materials:

One box with seven drawers (labeled nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions). 2" X 3" cards in each drawer with words fitting the part of speech.

Directions:

1. Each drawer contains a different part of speech.
2. You are to pull out words from several boxes and use them to make a story of your own or write several sentences.
3. Use the paper and pencil provided.
4. Place your completed paper in the finished work folder.

Extended ideas:

A specific story can be assigned for less imaginative students or those who do not wish to make up their own stories. The students take words from the story, write them on 2" X 3" cards, and label them on the back so the teacher can correct their labels. The accurate cards are placed in the labeled drawers. Use English textbooks or workbooks for word lists.

Evaluation:

The teacher will review the papers to note correct usage of words.

12. Sentence Expansion I

Time: thirty minutes, number of students: 4.

Instructional Objectives: The student will be able to write better sentences by combining, expanding, and rearranging them.

Materials: Paper, worksheets, dictionary and thesaurus.

Directions:

1. Select one worksheet from the "in" box.
2. Write your name and date at the top of the paper.
3. Follow the directions on the worksheet.
4. You may work with one or two other students on this activity, but each student must hand in a completed worksheet.
5. When you have completed the worksheet, return it to the "out" box.

Worksheets for Sentence Expansion Center

I. Directions: Rewrite each of the following sentences as question

1. The snow storm has lasted the entire day.
2. The workers built a new fence around the old ball park.
3. The cat has chased the pigeons from the roof.
4. Meagan mowed the lawn this morning.
5. The girls have beaten the boys in the swim meet.
6. You had read this before.

II. Directions: Write these sentences, adding an adjective (a descriptive word) in each blank space.

1. My _____ sisters helped.
2. My _____ brother wrote _____ songs
3. The _____ boy threw the _____ magazine away.
4. A _____ woman wrote a _____ story.
5. A _____ crowd followed the _____ actors.
6. The girl visited her _____ cousins.
7. The _____ mayor greeted the _____ visitors.
8. Two _____ squirrels picked the _____ papers off the _____ table.
9. The _____ world wants _____ peace.
10. _____ Gabriel had a _____ dream.

III. Directions: Write ten new sentences by adding words to each part of these sentences. Expand the noun part, then the verb part.

1. Women work.
2. Miguel laughed
3. Feet stamped.
4. Beets grew.
5. Snow fell.
6. Bells tinkle.
7. Jennifer told a joke.
8. We called the horses.
9. Ellen likes tomatoes.
10. Rain hit the roof.

IV. Directions: Combine each pair of sentences to make one longer, more interesting sentence. Use such connecting words as but, or, while, so, or and.

1. George will speak. He will take notes.
2. The cab driver pulled over to the curb. She turned off the motor.
3. The motor boat raced across the lake. The swimmer raced across the lake.
4. Sally will sing. She will hum.
5. Joey must return early. He will not be allowed to go again.
6. The gardener cut the flowers. He did not water the plants.
7. The tugboats tooted. The ship tooted back.
8. The rain stopped. The wind kept howling.
9. The little boy coughed. He almost choked.
10. Ms. Hill spoke. Mr. Hill spoke at the same time.

Evaluation:
The class can review the papers in small groups.

13. Writing for a Newspaper--All Angles

Time: Undetermined, number of students: 1-3.

Instructional Objectives: Students will focus on the several, different ways that a story can be covered to ellicit a reader's attention.

Materials: paper, sample story with a variety of versions, worksheets, thesaurus and dictionary.

Directions:

1. Students will look over the sample news story and the variety of different ways it was covered by different authors.

Sample News Item

A news item is like a rough diamond. It appears insignificant until it has been properly faceted. The facets of a news item are the angles that can be "cut" and developed.

Here is a rough diamond of a news item.

> Tom Janeway, a three-year-old, last week baked his first batch of chocolate chip cookies. Tom baked the cookies "from scratch," shaping the final product into animal forms. His mother, Denise Janeway, supervised the project. Janeway is the home economics teacher at Galena High School.

As it stands, the news item is worth a passing chuckle, no more.

But treat it as a reporter would--hold it up to the light and explore the possibilities. Play the angles.

Consider the chocolate chip caper.

* One fascinating angle is that the baker is a three-year-old.

possible story #1 an interview with Tom, a precocious 3 year old.

" " #2 a feature on precocious children, one of whom is Tom.

" " #3 a survey of child-care specialists as to the potential of three-year-olds.

* A second angle is "baking from scratch."

possible story #4 "baking from scratch."

" " #5 the return to the natural in the "younger" generation.

" " #6 renewed interest in the old crafts; candle-dipping; woodcraft; and baking "from scratch."

* A third angle is chocolate chip cookies shaped like animals.

possible story #7 a "how-to" story including recipe.

" " #8 the imagination of a small child.

possible story # 9 a consideration of the harmonious relationship between children and animals.

* A fourth angle--Tom's mother is a home ec. teacher.

possible story #10 a feature exploring the influence of a mother's occupation on her children.

" " #11 a humorous contrast story of Tom's accomplishments with that of Denise Janeway's home ec. students.

" " #12 a feature on working mothers.

* A fifth angle--Galena High School

possible story #13 Galena High School teachers who have unusual skills.

" " #14 Galena High School teachers and their children.

Level I: Try to find eight possible features in the following news item:

Thirty-six butternut squash were stolen last night from the garden of Sam Schneider of Benton, New York. Authorities are confused because the acorn squash were not touched. The Schneider Great Dane, which has been trained as a watchdog, gave no alarm, although he is an inveterate barker.

Schneider is now consulting a local insurance company to see about theft insurance for future crops.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Here are the Five W's for a less unusual event--an event that might even happen to you or to a friend of yours at any time.

What?.....Motorcycle won in a contest.

Who?.....By Glenda Carlson: contest sponsored by Motorcycles,Inc.

When?....October 3

Where?...Indianapolis, Indiana

Why?.....Glenda wants to race in the teen-age Indianapolis races; needs her own cycle.

How?.....By writing a quatrain (4-line poem) about motorcycles.

Write a news story incorporating the above information.

Level II: Now find at least six possible features in the news item you just wrote.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Level III: Now make up your own news feature, complete with facts that answer the Five W's.

14. Sentence Expansion II

Time: 30 minutes, number of students: 1-5.

Instructional Objectives: The student will work with the expansion of a thought, working for a more colorful description.

Materials: paper, sample sentences, brief sentence exercises, and a thesaurus.

Directions:

1. Read the sample sentence that has been expanded by answering the questions: what kind of, how much or how many, whose, where, when, how, and why?

2. Select a card that will give an example of a brief thought that needs to be expanded in the same manner as the sample.

3. Hand your completed sentences in to your individual file folder.

Sample Expansion

Original sentence:

Some carpenters are building a house.

(What kind of?) Some young, strong hard-working carpenters are building a new, yellow ranch house sprawling on a large, square lot.

(How much or many) Ten young, strong hard-working carpenters are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large, square lot, 100 X 100.

(Whose?) Ten young, strong hard-working carpenters from the Jones Construction Company are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large, square lot, 100 X 100, for the Harris family of Chicago.

(Where?) Ten young, strong hard-working carpenters from the Jones Construction Company are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large, square lot, 100 X 100, at the corner of Broadway and the Boulevard, for the Harris family of Chicago.

(When?) Every weekday between 7 A. M. and 4 P. M., ten young strong hard-working carpenters from the Jones Construction Company are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large, square lot, 100 X 100, at the corner of Broadway and the Boulevard, for the Harris family of Chicago.

(How?) Every weekday between 7 A. M. and 4 P. M., ten

young, strong hard-working carpenters from the Jones Construction Company, using many power tools as well as hand saws, wrenches, pliers, and hammers and nails, are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large square lot, 100 X 100, at the corner of Broadway and the Boulevard, for the Harris family of Chicago.

(Why?) Every weekday between 7 A. M. and 4 P. M., ten young, strong hard-working carpenters from the Jones Construction Company, using many power tools as well as hand saws, wrenches, pliers, and hammers and nails, are building a new, yellow ranch house, perhaps sixty feet long and 35 feet wide, on a large, square lot, 100 X 100, at the corner of Broadway and the Boulevard, for the Harris family of Chicago, so that the family will be able to move into our community before school starts in September.

Suggested sentences.

The fireman extinguished the fire.

The automobile hit the truck.

The boys started the argument.

The witch bit into the apple.

The tree flourished.

The girl bought the skateboard.

The boys ate the spinach.

The woman lived in a shoe.

The dish ran away with the spoon.

The girl delivered the newspaper.

Evaluation: Teacher may choose to review these during a conference or the class may review them in small groups.

Additional Learning Center Writing Activities

The Card File

The card file consists of 4 1/2" X 6" colored cards. There are four different colors of cards:

A. GREEN CARDS--REPORT TITLES

Directions: Research this title, and make a booklet about it. Include everything that is important about it. Pictures,too!

Some of the report titles on the green cards are:

A Constellation	A Jungle Animal	What is Lava?
Comets	All About Trains	Magic
Braille	Zebras	Alphabet
Unicycles	Submarines	Dolphins
Sponges	Rocks	Canals
Boomerangs	Your Skin and Its Sense of Touch	What Is a Tsetse Fly?
Bowling	Ants	The Sphinx
Cheese	Baseball	Deserts
Rockets	Astronomy	Archery
Scientists	Clouds	X-rays
Castles	Witches	Butterflies
Harry Houdini	Airports	Your Sense of Hearing
What is Hieroglyphics?		

You could also have cards with:

Famous Flowers	Monuments, Memorials, Statues
Political Figures	Authors
Inventors	States
Sports Figures	Presidents

B. ORANGE CARDS--STORY STARTERS

Directions: These sentences must be the first sentence in your story.

--I was walking along the beach when suddenly...
--The children were playing on the beach when they found the strange footprints, and they decided to follow them.
--I dialed a number and guess who answered!
--Once upon a time, long, long ago...
--If I could be an object, I would be a...
--I can hardly wait until...
--If I were a giant...
--If I were the last person left on earth...
--George Washington would be surprised if...
--Today is a good day.

--If I were in Never-Never Land, I would...
--If my ruler were only a magic wand, I...
--If I were as small as Tom Thumb...
--The day I went to the moon, I...
--I get very angry when...
--If I had a million dollars...
--My dad is funny when...
--It was not quite ten o'clock when...
--Early one July morning I woke up to find Sherlock Holmes standing by my bed.
--If I had a magic pair of boots I would...
--I was really scared when...
--Mary knew that if her mother found out, she wouldn't be able to sit down for days, but she was determined to carry out her plan.
--I opened the door suddenly and...
--At first, the noise was very faint and seemed far away. It was an odd noise, one that the girls didn't recognize. As it moved closer, they went out to see what it might have been.
--Pedro walked to the window to let in a little air. As he began to raise it, something outside caught his eye. He stood there with his mouth open.
--Andy moved to a new neighborhood and when he tried to make friends..
--It was on a chilly evening that I met the girl named...
--I wish somebody would invent....
--If I were invisible...
--I am the brake on your car.
--I love school when...
--There were many reasons to suspect him of doing the act, but there were none I could prove.
--It is perhaps the most enduring mystery in the world.
--Rarely has a proposed amendment to the U. S. Constitution caused such an uproar.
--It was a moment frozen in time by terror.
--There was something about Andre from the beginning.

C. PINK CARDS--Titles for Your Story

Directions: Read this title, then think of a good story to go with it, and write it.

How the Lion got His Roar
Why the Owl Says "Who?"
If I Were the Mayor
It Happened at the Magic Show
Go Out in Joy
Seven in the Sea
A Baseball Glove That Really Fit
Ambitions Are Dreams
A Glimpse of Glory
The Darkening of America
How Proudly We Hailed!
Murder of a Gentle Land
Helen and the Dragon
Leprechaun of the Light
Dreams Talk Back
The Girl Who Wouldn't Grow Up
Crabbers, Sooks and Jimmies
Journey to Faith
All Aboard the Skateboard
"You Can't Quit"
A Very Lucky Individual
Painted As They Are
Sculptures in the Sky
Bridge Across the Sky
All Quiet on the Western Front
How Many Dimes Make a Million?
Put That Small Idea to Work
Dirt Bikes Across the Desert

Comeback of the Small Town
Wisconsin: Land of the Gathering Waters
The Great Land Battle
The Summer I Learned to See
I've Got a Little List
A Johnny Appleseed of Our Time
Confessions of a Procrastinator
Time in a Bottle
Once Upon a Rollercoaster
The Ship That Hunted Itself
Noah: the Flood and the Facts
To Know Where We Have Been
The First Twelve Days of School
Kidnapped! The Ordeal That Shook the World
Outlaw Bear
Wise Sayings Revisited
Tidings of Comfort and Joy

D. YELLOW CARDS--IDEAS TO WRITE ABOUT

Read the suggestion on the card and write your own story.

--Write an amusing story about a food with an interesting name.
upside-down cake
Apple turnovers
angel-food cake
devil's-food cake
(or make up your own)

--Write a story about what you think your pencil and paper talked about last night.
--What if a plane landed on the school playground one day?
--Describe what a secret is.
--Describe to a creature from outer space what school is.
--Choose a product that you can buy in a store. Then write a commercial for it, trying to sell your product.
--If someone gave you three wishes, what would you wish for?
--What are some of the sounds you would hear when you are standing on a street corner? Tell us of your adventures.
--Describe how high is up.
--You found an old wallet with $50 in it. What were your experiences in trying to locate the owner?
--Imagine: You are to interview a famous person. What happened?
--Who would you most like to be if you could be anyone in the world?
--What if you found a turtle in your bathtub?
--Draw a picture of something you have never seen before. Then write and tell us what you will call it and what it does.
--What is your favorite color? Explain why.
--What if you were traveling across the mountains in a covered wagon a hundred years ago?
--What if you saw a zebra gazing in your bedroom window one morning?
--What is democracy and what does it mean to you?
--Write a mystery story about these three words: ghost,hill,storm.
--Write a space adventure. Imagine that you built your own rocket and went to the moon. What happened to you up there? What did you see?
--Tell what age you would like to be. Why?
--What if all the lights in your house went off every time you turned on the water?
--What would you do if you came to school late and found nobody in the room?
--Tell about where you would fly if you had wings?

--Write an autobiography.
--Answer this question, what are tears for?
--What would a cookie jar and a refrigerator say to each other in a house with ten children in it?
--If you met an animal that could talk, what would you talk about?
--A pirate captures you and hides you on his boat. Tell of your adventures on the boat until you are rescued.
--What if you were a stowaway on a ship?
--What is the funniest thing you ever saw?
--Write a story--a funny story--using these three things in it: map, dog, carpet.
--What would you do if you suddenly discovered you were only one inch tall?

SAMPLE TEACHER'S SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK OF: _____

_____
(subject)

NAME OF CENTER	M	TU	W	TH	F
LISTENING CENTER	Lg. Group prewriting	LEARNING CENTER			Lg. group Editing Process
VOCABULARY	introduce writing assignment		ACTIVITY		* *
MEDIA CENTER OR LIBRARY	explain centers for week				* * * *
SKILLS GROUP	make specific student assignments to centers			Bob Carol	* *
CREATIVE EXPRESSION			Sue Jean		* * * *
WRITING LAB (MUST SIGN UP IN PAIRS)		Jan Holly			* * *
CONFERENCE (MUST SIGN UP FOR ONE DAY)		Lori Carol Bob Bonnie Jan Shane Holly	Roy Jeff Pete Ann	Carol Allen Jean Dave Tom	* * *
SENTENCE EXPANSION		Tom Dave Allen			* * *
INDEPENDENT STUDY		Sue Bonnie	Carol Allen		* * *

DIAGNOSTIC GRID SHEET

Source:
INDIVIDUALIZED LANGUAGE ARTS
ESEA Title IV Project 70-014

Teacher _____ grade _____

School _____ date _____

Student's Names

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT					
1. varied language					
2. vivid language					
3. figurative language					
4. reinforcement, new words					
5. clear usage					
6. superfluous language					
MORPHOLOGY (Proper grammatical usage)					
7. suffixes, verb forms					
8. helping verbs					
9. agreement					
10. tense, mood					
11. case					
12. person					
SENTENCE STRUCTURE					
13. complete sentences					
14. run-on sentences					
15. ample, varied modifiers					
16. misplaced, dangling modifiers					
17. parallelism					
18. sentence-openings					
19. sentence types:					
a. patterns					
b. declaration, interrogative, imperative					
c. exclamatory					
d. simple, complex, compound					
20. length of sentences					
21. series					
22. voice					
23. mood					
ORGANIZATION					
24. paragraph					
25. topic sentences					
26. support sentences					
27. conclusion					
28. shifts in topic/point of view within paragraphs					
29. transitional devices within paragraphs					
30. logical series of paragraphs					
31. shifts in topic/point of view within series					
32. end punctuation					
33. internal punctuation					
34. spelling					
35. OTHER					

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SUGGESTED CHECKLIST DIRECTIONS FOR ORAL READING OF COMPOSITIONS

Before I begin to read my composition aloud, have I read it through silently, several times, so that I am well prepared? Do I need to make any changes in my composition before I start the oral reading?

As I start reading my own composition aloud, or a buddy's--or as I listen to other student's compositions being read aloud--do I know just what to listen for?

Am I reading my composition aloud in a natural, easy way that shows my listeners how I feel and what I consider to be the most important parts of the composition?

As I read my composition aloud, am I reading exactly what I have written--not adding, subtracting, moving around, or changing a single word?

As I read aloud, am I coming to a full, definite stop for each end-punctuation mark, so that my listeners can tell where my sentences begin and end? Can my listeners also tell whether I have varied the lengths of my sentences to suit my ideas and feelings?

As I read aloud, am I pausing longer between paragraphs than between sentences, so that my listeners can tell where my paragraphs begin and end?

As I read my composition orally, can my listeners tell, from the way my voice rises or falls naturally at the end of each sentence, whether it is a telling (declarative) or commanding (imperative) sentence, or an asking (interrogative) sentence? Can my audience also tell, from the way my voice goes up and becomes louder than usual, when I am reading an exclamatory sentence (a sentence that shows my strong feelings)? As I read my composition aloud, am I pausing briefly for each semicolon, comma, or other punctuation mark inside my sentences? Am I pausing a little more noticeably for semicolons than for commas or other marks?

As I read my composition aloud, am I giving special distinctness to the most important parts: the title, introductory paragraph, topic or opening sentences, important new words or ideas, and concluding paragraph? Can my listeners always tell what my topic is, and my main ideas, and the purpose of my paper?

As I read my composition aloud, am I pronouncing every single word carefully, so that my audience knows exactly what I am saying at all times? Can my audience always tell whether or not I have used words correctly? Can they also tell whether or not I have used a variety of words to suit my ideas and feelings, and whether or

not my words are vivid and interesting? Can they tell, from the kinds of words I have used, what my attitude towards my subject is?

Source: INDIVUALIZED LANGUAGE ARTS
ESEA Title IV Project 70-014

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The High School Writing Lab

High school writing labs are a relatively recent addition to composition programs, growing out of a rising concern for the general level of writing skills of today's young people. College labs provide most of the models. Over the last ten or fifteen years, open admission policies at most universities have necessitated the development of labs to meet the needs of poorly prepared students, and much of their work involves secondary level skills. A surprising degree of consensus exists among directors of successful labs as to how to structure, operate and staff a good program. Most of these ideas adapt quite well to high school situations. The only prerequisites are a supportive administration and a teaching staff committed to improving their students' writing.

At the high school level, a writing lab is a separate place, outside of class, where students receive individual, tutorial help, with their writing. Students who use the lab may need help with an idiosyncratic problem or general development of writing ability. The competent writer may seek enrichment, additional writing experience or help with a specific writing assignment for a specific class. Learning centers are stations within the lab for work on specific skills or problems diagnosed by the tutor. Learning center work may be an interruption of the regular writing lab conferences, but is not a substitute for them.

SETTING

Ideally a writing lab should be a room used only for that purpose; however, a section of an IMC or an unassigned classroom can serve just as well. The important aspect of the physical setting is that it does not resemble a normal class. The writing lab is a place for help, not evaluation or traditional instruction. Its different purpose should be reflected in a different setting if at all possible to reassure the intimidated student or calm a hostile one (and most students sent to a lab fit into one of these categories initially). Beyond the actual room, nothing expensive or unusual is needed in the way of furnishings. Tables and chairs arranged in a manner conducive to conferences, individual study and perhaps small group work are really all that is necessary. Plants and posters can be used to soften the atmosphere, but the room should still convey the idea that "work goes on here." For this reason sofas and stuffed chairs are not recommended; the lab is not a lounge and should not look like one.

File cabinets for records, individualized lessons and student folders should be readily accessible to both teachers and students. Bookshelves for texts, handbooks, guides and the like are needed, and could be used to divide the room into sections. A permanent or portable blackboard, and an overhead projector and screen will be useful occasionally, but elaborate AV equipment is unnecessary. The personal instruction and attention a writing lab offers is effective for almost any student.

Since the purpose of the lab is to help students, it must be available to them. This means maintaining hours of operation which

coincide with students' free time. Whether this includes before and/or after school seasions depends on the amount of unassigned time most students normally have during the day, and on the other demands made upon the time of the teachers who staff the lab. At any rate, it is best to keep the lab open as much of the school day as possible to provide ample opportunities for students to fit this extra work into their schedules. Hours should be posted around the building and perhaps even announced by classroom teachers periodically to remind students of the facility.

MATERIALS

The materials of a good lab are not elaborate or mysterious, and should be suited to the place the lab will hold within the curriculum. For instance, sample texts for each course feeding the lab should be collected for reference for the tutor and student. Dictionaries, thesauri, style books, workbooks and writing texts available in the school are the only formal materials necessary, although you may wish to include a few copies of books to be used only in the lab - books especially chosen for their usefulness in an individualized situation. Models, both professional and student, can be very helpful in work on sentence structure, style, format, work choice and so forth. Since students tend to be forgetful, a supply of paper and pencils can prevent their wasting time on trips to a locker or the school store. For record-keeping of student progress, feedback for referring teachers and storage of student work, plenty of folders and prepared forms should be kept handy. Gathering these materials will probably be an on-going process, but the more that can be done ahead of time, the better.

The time-consuming creation and organization of learning center handouts and exercises are probably the most difficult tasks of setting up a writing lab. Possible topics include work on grammar, mechanics, sentence combining, proofreading and editing, usage and agreement, and perhaps spelling and vocabulary. Although an explanation of purpose and procedure will usually be given orally to the student first, this information should also be provided on the worksheet or handout itself. Exercises should be short and focus on only one thing at a time; handouts should be to the point and easy to refer to. The completed worksheets should be easy for the tutor to check quickly. The most important thing to remember about the learning center activities is that they are only steps in the process of improving writing, never the finished product. The student should understand the relevance of each skill or practice to his writing from the beginning, and should apply it in actual written work as soon as possible.

THE TEACHER

Although the teachers who staff a writing lab should be composition teachers who understand the writing process and how students learn, they should not be evaluators or instructors, proofreaders or editors, advocates or arbitrators in student disputes with other teachers. Their purpose should be, through intensive personal conferences, to help the student develop confidence, in, control of, and responsibility for her writing. For many students, this constitutes a new view of the writing process and can best be developed in a positive attitude with people the student trusts. The writing lab staff should be skillful guides, effective tutors,

or occasionally just sounding boards. Conference work is accomplished through questioning the student about his purpose, effectiveness and uncertainties; through emphasis on strengths as well as weaknesses; through directed practice of skills and techniques the student needs; through help on the steps of prewriting, composing and editing without actually doing them for the student.

Many writing labs use a combination of peer tutors and teacher tutors with great success. When other students are used as part of the staff, it is important that they be involved in the writing process themselves so that they are true peers and not "mini teachers," and that they be carefully trained in the necessary skills for good tutoring. They should be able to quickly analyze a piece of writing for both competence and deficiencies, to question and suggest ways to improve tactfully, but directly, to understand and relate to a variety of personalities and problems. Often the best tutors are not those for whom writing is an easy task, but those who have had to struggle with and conquer their own writing problems.

A successful lab must have some degree of support from people other than students. The staff of the lab should be responsible for making sure members of those departments which will use the lab understand its purpose and, especially, how it can help them. The regular teaching staff should be shown that this program can take on some of the problems for which they really have no time, and that it is in no way intended to undermine their assignments or priorities. Parents, too, must be informed of the work going on in the lab and the ways in which it can help their children become

more competent writers. No program can succeed without the endorsement of the administration. For this reason, some form of documentation or other communication on the use and effectiveness of the lab must be provided to principals, coordinators, or whoever else oversees school policy. To fulfill all of these responsibilities to students, teachers, parents and administration, the teachers who staff the lab should do so as a large part of their regular schedule, rather than as an additional duty.

PROCEDURE

Whether a student is referred by a teacher or simply comes in on his own for general help with his writing the tutor should begin with a sample of that student's work. Two to five hundred words will provide the tutor with enough of an idea of the student's problems and strengths to start the process of helping him. This sample can be a past class assignment, or could be written specifically for use in the lab. At any rate, it will provide the subject for the initial conference. In diagnosing a student's writing, a tutor should consider any remarks or suggestions made by a referring teacher, the analysis made by the student himself during the interview, and his own view of the situation after reading the sample and talking with the tutee. Conferences should be as positive as possible, beginning with what the student does right and leading him to discover where he could improve. The process is the reverse of the one the student has often encountered in class, and he may be reluctant, at first, to trust it. Hence, the first job of the tutor is to foster the student's confidence in himself and in the writing lab situation.

The tutor's diagnosis of the student's writing should not focus only on the visible problem, but the cause of it. For example, a student referred for a run-on sentence problem should not be sent directly to a learning center exercise on identifying and correcting a variety of run-ons. Does the student know what a sentence is? If not, she must work on sentence structure and recognition. If the student does understand what a sentence is, there are several possibilities to explore. Is she proofreading and editing? Does she understand the use of semi-colons and colons for closely related sentences? Is she confused by the punctuation of clauses or non-restrictive constructions? Any of these issues could lead to writing run-ons. Identifying the correct cause is the only sure way of correcting the problem. Perhaps a learning center exercise would help, or perhaps the misconception is profound enough to require several conference sessions first. At any rate, the success of the lab depends on the sensitivity of the tutor to the student's individual needs.

If a lab is structured to allow students to drop-in, it is reasonable to expect a large number of them to come in with questions about a specific writing assignment. In this case, the tutor must help the student solve his problem not solve it for him. Careful questioning on the purpose, meaning and audience for an essay topic, the words used or the material covered in class prior to the assignment can help a student who is having trouble getting started. A student seeking help polishing a finished essay could be shown how to edit her own work, perhaps with a demonstration, perhaps with a checklist. The tutor may choose to read the essay aloud to the student and question her about its strong and weak points, isolating

one or two major areas for the student to rework. Sometimes it is the desire for help on a specific paper which leads to a commitment for extended work on general problems; therefore, allowing students to bring in assignments for help is something to be seriously considered in structuring a writing lab.

Above all, it is important that students understand that no evaluation will take place in the lab. The student should know that he cannot play one teacher against another in the grading of his paper. He is responsible for his writing and to his regular teachers; the writing lab tutor must not be expected to shoulder either burden, for the student's sake or that of the other faculty members.

RECORD--KEEPING

The type and number of records kept on student visits, conferences and progress depends upon the individual school. In general, it is wise to keep a folder for each tutee, noting the reason for the visit, the work accomplished or progress made and any suggestions for further visits; however, the purpose of these folders is not evaluation. Referring teachers will want to know what has gone on in the sessions and the tutor will need to refresh his memory before each conference. These records must be open and available to the student as well, since she has a right to the information kept. The records can also provide a valuable resource for the development of new lessons, special sessions on a common problem curriculum develpment in the departments using the lab, or documentation for administration and community. The writing lab personnel should supply teachers with referral forms and provide them with whatever feedback seems necessary. To maintain a valid and useful program the students and teachers who use the lab should be asked periodically to evaluate its effectiveness. These questionnaires should be short and easy to fill out to ensure cooperation from already busy people.

A. SAMPLE REFERRAL FORM

Student's Name_____ Date_____

Instructor's Name_____

Course_____Time_____

Reason for referral:_____

_____

Other comments;_____

_____

****

SAMPLE FEEDBACK FOR

Date_____

_____ has been attending the writing
(Student's name)
lab for work on_____

_____

Please see me if you have any questions concerning his/her progress.

_____

(Lab instructor's name)

Sample Handouts and Exercises

EDITING CHECK LIST

Editing is a very important step in producing a clear, effective paper. Until this stage you were probably worrying about what to say and what was needed to support it. Now it's time to think about how you said it. Go through your paper carefully, using this checklist as a guide for spotting places where you can make improvements or corrections.

A. PARAGRAPHS AND ORGANIZATION

1. Is there a good reason for each of your paragraphs?

2. Could some of your paragraphs be combined because they are covering the same point? Could some of them be split because they are covering several main ideas?

3. Is the purpose of each paragraph clear to the reader? In those paragraphs without topic sentences, is the main idea clear without one?

4. Are your paragraphs arranged in the clearest and most logical way? (least to most important, chronologically, some other system suited to your topic.)

5. Have you connected your ideas smoothly with transitions?

6. Does your introductory paragraph attract your reader's attention? Is it appropriate to the subject and tone of your paper? Does it lead smoothly into your topic?

7. Does your concluding paragraph bring your paper to a satisfying end? Have you included more than is necessary to wrap up your topic? Have you included new information which you have not previously discussed?

B. CONTENT

1. Does each paragraph have something worthwhile to say? Could you remove any sentences or paragraphs without changing the meaning or support?

2. Are all your generalizations supported with specific examples, illustrations or quotations?

3. Have you strayed from your topic?

4. Have you fully covered your topic?

C. LANGUAGE

1. Have you tried to choose the best word you know in each case to say exactly what you mean?

2. Have you overused a word or phrase, causing a distraction for the reader?

E. MECHANICS

1. Spelling

2. Capitalization

3. Punctuation suited to meaning

4. Subject/Verb agreement

5. Clear and accurate pronoun reference

After making any changes you feel are necessary and rewriting your paper, proofread a final time to make sure you have not made any errors in recopying.

SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM

FIVE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PAPERS

I. CONTENT

A. Is the paper interesting?
B. Are the ideas relatively fresh and original?
C. Do the observations suggest critical perceptions and insight?
D. Are the conclusions developed from an objective, logical, comprehensive examination of the subject?
E. Does the paper go beyond trite comments and obvious statements?

II. POINT-OF-VIEW

A. Is it written from a consistent viewpoint?
B. Is the tone appropriate to the audience, subject, and purpose?

III. ORGANIZATION

A. Is the paper about the assigned subject?
B. Does it have a clear plan?
C. Is it developed logically?
D. Is the subject adequately limited?
E. Is the paper unified around a central thesis?
F. Are the introduction and conclusion effective?
G. Are the paragraphs organized?

1. Do they contain topic sentences?
2. Is all the material in each paragraph relevant to the topic sentence?
3. Are the sentences arranged in logical order?
4. Is continuity achieved with transitional devices?

IV. STYLE

A. Have unnecessary words been eliminated?
B. Are the sentences effective?

1. Are the sentences varied in length and type?
2. Are short, simple sentences used appropriately?
3. Is the passive voice used only where it is effective?
4. Is subordination used to signal intended relationship?
5. Is parallelism used where possible?

C. Is the voice natural?

V. MECHANICAL

A. Is the paper completely free of gross spelling errors and generally free of others?

B. Is helpful punctuation included?
C. Does the writer know when to capitalize and when not to?
D. Does the writer handle titles, syllabification, and abbreviations acceptably?
E. Is the paper free of major sentence faults? (Fragments, run-ons.)
F. Does the writer follow acceptable usage standards in matters of agreement? (Subject-verb, pronoun-antecedent.)
G. Is the paper free of dangling modifiers?

SAMPLE EXERCISE

SENTENCE COMBINING[1]

One characteristic of a mature writer is an ability to manipulate the sentences within a piece of writing to make one meaning clearer through emphasis and to add interest and variety to his style. The following exercises will help you discover ways to combine sentences to achieve these two goals.

A. DIRECTIONS: For each pair of sentences, emphasize the first one by turning the second one into a clause (use who, which or that) and combining it with the first sentence in a way which makes the most sense.

example: 1) The puppy was lonely and frightened.
2) The puppy was taken from its mother too soon.

The puppy, which was taken from its mother too soon, was lonely and frightened.

1) Notre Dame is a famous cathedral in the heart of Paris.
2) It dates from the twelfth century.

a. _____

1) The door slammed on my finger.
2) The door was made of oak.

b. _____

1) The odor came from the spoiled cheese.
2) The odor permeated the refrigerator.

c. _____

1) Grandmother smelled the smoke.
2) Grandmother was having trouble getting to sleep.

d. _____

1) The kittens contributed to the general chaos of the household.
2) The kittens were born in Steve's clothes closet.

B. DIRECTIONS: Using the same set of sentences, change the second into a participial phrase by removing the subject and putting the verb into either its past tense or -ing form; then add it to the first sentence in a way which make the most sense.

example: 1) The puppy was lonely and frightened.

2) The puppy was taken from its mother too soon.

The puppy, taken from its mother too soon, was lonely and frightened.

OR

Taken from its mother too soon, the puppy was lonely and frightened.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

---

[1]Levy, Edward and Tibbetts, Charlene. Rhetoric in Thought and Writing. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

SAMPLE PROGRESS SHEET

Student_____ Date_____

Lab Instructor_____

Summary of conference:

Additional work done by student:

Possible subject of next conference:

****

SAMPLE STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

We would very much appreciate your evaluation of the progress you have made in the writing lab this semester. Please circle the appropriate number for each question. Feel free to add any other comments you wish to make. Thanks for your help.

1. DO YOU FEEL THE MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTION YOU RECEIVED IN THIS LAB WERE CLEAR, APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVELY PRESENTED?

1	2	3	4	5
not clear or effective.		adequate.		very clear and effective.

2. DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE MADE REAL PROGRESS IN YOUR WRITING AS A RESULT OF THE LAB?

1	2	3	4	5
no progress.		some progress.		a great deal of progress.

3. DO YOU FEEL THAT WHAT YOU LEARNED IN THE LAB HELPED TO IMPROVE YOUR GRADES?

1	2	3	4	5
grades dropped or did not change.		rose one grade.		rose two grades or better.

Other comments or suggestions:

SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM

To:_____ Date:_____
(classroom teacher)

From:_____
(lab instructor)

_____ has been working in the writing lab this semester on the following skills:_____

_____

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing lab, we would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions and return this questionaire to the lab.

1. THIS STUDENT NEEDED:

1	2	3	4	5
very little help		some help.		a great deal of help.

2. IN THE SKILLS LISTEL ABOVE, THIS STUDENT HAS SHOWN:

1	2	3	4	5
no improvement.		some improvement.		great improvement.

3. BY THE END OF THIS SEMESTER, THE STUDENT'S GRADES:

1	2	3	4	5
dropped or did not change.		rose one grade.		rose at least two grades.

4. WHILE ATTENDING THE LAB, THIS STUDENT EXPRESSED THE FOLLOWING FEELINGS TOWARD IT:

1	2	3	4	5
resentment.		none expressed.		a great deal of appreciation.

5. THIS STUDENT'S WRITING CONFIDENCE:

1	2	3	4	5
decreased.		unchanged.		greatly improved.

6. THIS STUDENT'S DESIRE TO WRITE SEEMS:

1	2	3	4	5
decreased or unchanged.		somewhat increased.		greatly increased.

7. DURING THE SEMESTER, THE FEEDBACK I RECEIVED FROM THE LAB CONCERNING THIS STUDENT WAS:

1	2	3	4	5
less than I wished.		adequate.		excellent.

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Summer 1980

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Evansville Elementary School

Beverly Bonge
Middleton High School

Rachel Kapp Brickner
H. C. Steffen School
Mequon

Rachel Davies
Lake Shore Middle School
Mequon

Ann Gibson
Windsor Grade School

Nancy Gorchels
Franklin Elementary School
Madison

Lorraine Jaeger
Homestead High School
Mequon

Laurie Klevgard
Johnson Creek Elementary School

Holly Lyon
West High School
Madison

Susan Owensby
E. G. Kromrey Middle School
Middleton

Bobbie Reihsen
West Middleton School

Kris Servais
Delavan-Darien Middle School

Mary Short
Green Tree School
West Bend

Robin Staudt
Phoenix School
Delavan

Myrtle Stoll
Sabish Junior High School
Fond du Lac

Marjorie B. Thompson
DeForest Middle School

Mike Vena
Randall Elementary School
Madison

Kathryn L. Welch
South Beaver Dam School

Sally Ziolkowski
Badger Middle School
West Bend

The Wisconsin Writing Project is an effort by school teachers, college faculty, and curriculum specialists to improve the teaching of writing at all levels of education. The Project is funded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin Improvement Program, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (through the University of California, Berkeley). The views expressed in this guide do not necessarily represent the views of the above named organizations.

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